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HOSPITAL-VISITING.

Nor long ago, finding time to spare, I agreed to assist a friend in visiting a London hospital, at least once in the week. This seemed a small affair. I mean to shew what it came to, rather in the hope of inducing others to help, where much help is needed—help of so many kinds almost all within the reach and the power of *some* one. The chief contributions required are these—time, money, old clothes, tea and sugar in very small quantities, oranges, old toys, old newspapers and books. These are not always in the power of individuals to give; but out of many, each one might give a part, however small—an ounce of tea one day, an old shawl or worn linen garment another, a few oranges. I need not go through the list. How many could at least give the *time* that often hangs heavy upon hand and heart—that could be well spent, a single hour of it, once or twice a week; not in preaching or praying with the sick—that is not always needed or desired—but in simply sitting by the bed of some poor hospital patient, who has no friend in London to come and see him on the visiting-days, and who looks wistfully at the more fortunate ones whose families and friends come to them regularly enough on the days and at the hours allowed.

It was on a visiting-day, a Wednesday, that I paid my first visit to the hospital of this district. I knew nothing of the rules and regulations, and passed in with the patients' friends unnoticed. The great entrance and hall marked the centre of the building, crossed at right angles by a wide and long stone corridor, with a stair at each end—the women's wards to the right, the men's to the left: the four stories exactly alike. A pleasant-looking woman, evidently nurse or matron, was knitting at a door, over which the names of three wards, to which it led, were painted in large letters.

My only shyness was the lack of a direct reason or excuse for speaking to any *one* patient in particular; but I thought there might be a child somewhere, and I had oranges in my bag, and went on. There *was* a child in the first ward I entered—a

white, thin, wizened creature, close to the door. There were about a dozen beds, almost all filled. A long, lofty room, well ventilated; almost too well, I have often thought since, when sitting in a thorough draught between that wide open door and the high north window open at the top.

Most of the patients had visitors—the child had none. I sat down on an empty bed next her, and asked her how long she had been there. Three weeks, she thought—it was a long time. She had disease of the hip-joint. Did it hurt her? 'Yes, when she moved, dreadful; and they moved her so many times.' Had she had any one to come and see her? Yes, her little brother had been. Mother couldn't, not to-day; she had hurt her arm, and it was very bad, and Johnny had come to tell her. She was eight years old, and Johnny was seven. Yes, father was at work in the country, and mother did charring and washing; and she had three more brothers and a sister. I peeled an orange and gave it to her to eat, while I took a survey of the other patients. A quiet, sad-faced girl, with a bandage over her eyes, sat knitting slowly near the fire; the ball of worsted rolled off her lap close to my feet. I picked it up, and went across to her. It was as good as an introduction; we were friends directly. She was nearly blind from small-pox, and neglect and cold afterwards; the eyes were constantly under treatment, and covered entirely from the light. Nobody had been to see her that week. 'Father was terribly *down*,' she said; he had been out of work for two months. He did odd jobs: watching empty houses, &c. for the builders—only *stray* work now and then; and he was bad with rheumatism, and terribly low. Her sister told her he would sit for hours staring right at the wall—she thought he fretted for work; and they had no other way of living, now she was in hospital. Her sister was married, and her man had work, and she was very good to father. 'But it frets me sadly, ma'am,' she said with quivering lips, 'thinking of father by himself, and so low as he is—it does fret me, indeed. He hasn't the heart to come here, ma'am, unless he'd got something to bring me; and if he does bring me a little tea or sugar, I feel

he's given away all he's got ;' and the tears rolled down from the poor hidden eyes.

We talked of hope of work, of hope of cure for herself, or chances of better days for the poor father. I could have staid longer talking to the gentle little soul, who spoke so quietly of her troubled life and home, with an accent and manner far above her class ; but I had more to see even that first day. The other beds seemed to have plenty of visitors, and I went into the next ward. Finding one excuse or another, I got into conversation with several patients ; one, a bright-looking woman, recovering from rheumatic fever, whose husband and children arrived while I was talking. She told me she did washing and charring—the old story—and the husband was out of work these two months, and was losing heart. His face said that much as he came up and sat down at the bed foot with a weary sigh. 'Have ye heard nothing?' she said anxiously. 'Nothing at all,' he said ; and his head drooped. Such a worn, anxious, weary face. The children were clean and cared for. 'There's only him to do it, you see, ma'am, and he's that careful of them ; and they go regular to the school. I'll be glad to get home, God knows ; but he can't get work, and it's telling on him, ma'am, that it is—he seems to lose hope, he do.'

A little more talk, and a shilling and a little tea and sugar to the poor mother ; and I went slowly down the ward, and stopping near the door, two very wistful eyes, and a very thin haggard young face stopped me. 'Have you no visitors to-day?' I said as a beginning. 'No, ma'am ; I've no friends in London at all.' She was nineteen, she said. Her husband was at sea ; her baby was with a poor neighbour ; 'and they don't feed him, nor care for him, and they haven't brought him to-day ;' and she broke into sobs, and hid her face upon the bed. 'He won't live, I know ; and they don't allow me to have him here except on visiting-days, and to-day they haven't brought him.' Poor little woman ; I thought, even hospital rules might have been stretched to allow her to keep her own baby. But so it was ; and she was crying her anxious heart out when I went away.

I spoke to many more that day—cases more or less sad, more or less poor, and friendless : many of them of hopeless illness ; and some that would be turned out in a week or so, scarcely better, to return to their poor homes, to miss the warmth, and the nourishment, and the care which for a few weeks had made sickness less hard—some to go out into the pitiless streets, homeless. 'I'm to go out Tuesday, ma'am,' said one poor woman upstairs ; 'that's one week more.' 'And where do you go?' I asked, for she did not speak complainingly. 'God knows, ma'am.'

There were plenty more like her. 'Where should I find you?' I said to one to whom I had promised petticoat. She was to leave next day, and I was not able to return to the hospital for a day or two more. 'Where would a note or parcel find you?' She grew crimson. 'Well, ma'am, it's the truth, I've nowhere to go, and I don't know in the world where I'll go first. There was a poor woman I lodged with once ; but she's gone away, and I haven't anywhere to go. Maybe I'll get a night's lodging near where I was before. Ye see, ma'am, it would be nothing at all if I was well, but I'm not fit to work these three weeks yet.'

Fit to work! Ah! my fine ladies, if you could have seen her—you who lie in bed for a cold, and silence the house and darken the room if you have a headache. This poor soul, racked with cough, aching in every limb, both lungs diseased, worn to a skeleton, thinly and barely clad, going out with scarce a complaint into the cold streets—homeless, friendless, without food, and without fire in those cold March nights! Strange and sad enough it is to know how many scores of these poor creatures exist, somehow and somewhere in London, seemingly belonging to no one—without relations, or home, or ties of any sort or kind.

The women and girls who sell oranges and apples on the street are generally of this class—mostly Irish, they have not a link in this wide London world.

I do not need to speak of half the patients in the hospital wards with whom and with whose histories I became somewhat acquainted that first day—but I will mention one more ; a plain, fair, intelligent-looking woman sent the nurse to me, and asked if I would speak to her. 'You see, ma'am,' she said, 'I thought you might pass me and not speak, and I haven't had a soul to speak to but the patients since I came ; and it does feel so lonely seeing the other folks with their friends about them, and not one have I to come near me.' After this single speech, I could get little out of her. She seemed to draw back and regret having spoken. I was going away, and asked her if she would care to have a newspaper. Yes, she would ; she liked to see about the theatres. 'I used to belong to the profession,' she said, half shyly, as if expecting I should be surprised. Seeing I evinced only interest, and not a pious horror, she went on to say she had been a dancer, and then taken different parts, chiefly comic, and done pretty well till she married a surgeon ; 'but he was a gentleman, worse luck,' she said, with a considerable Irish accent ; 'and his father was a gentleman, and a member of parliament ; and a terrible life I had with him.' He had lived upon her for a time, till her health failed, and then went off one day with all the money she had—about ten pounds—returned and sold the furniture, and left her with a few shillings and her clothes. She believed he was in Canada ; but he had been away two years, and she did not know that he would ever come back—and if he did, if I ever saw the face of him'— And she broke down. 'Was he not kind to you?' I asked, more for something to say. 'If he did return, would it be any good ?'

'No, ma'am,' she said sadly—'little good. I know that, I believe I'm best off without him ; but I did love the very shoe-strings of him. And if he was to kill me—well'—

It was the old story—the old sad story, that has been and shall be acted out while men wrong and women forgive—injury, neglect, cruelty, absence, desertion ; but his place was kept. Poor woman ! I was thinking all this, when a slim girl came up and took the teapot from the shelf above the bed.

'Double allowance to-night, Mrs Dean,' she said with a smile. 'Mother's left me some tea—We always put our tea together, ma'am ; it goes further so,' she explained. 'And we that's better, and can go about, we wait on them that's abed, you see.'

'She's been very kind, that girl has,' said Mrs Dean. 'I shall miss her. She's going to be sent

to the convalescent home to-morrow. I wish I was going too.'

I thought this might be managed, and said so ; and asked further what her plans were when she went out.

Plans—she had none. If she were only well enough, she could get work at the theatres, where she was known ; but to shew herself in such clothes as she had left would only injure her cause, she said. She must go respectably dressed, or they would not give her employment. She was to go out in a week or so. She had not a change of linen, or anything but the poor clothes she had come in, such as they were. 'And, O ma'am, it's degradation to be so dirty. Think of it—not a change these two weeks ; and I can't even stay in bed and get them washed for want of money—and I lived like a lady once,' she said, and burst out crying. 'Oh,' she said bitterly, 'and me crying for the clean clothes I can't have, and never a tear for the grief that's killing me. Ah, well!'

Visions of a 'bag' for the hospital flitted across my brain, collected from every friend and acquaintance I could muster ; old clothes or new linen, and cotton under-garments and night-dresses for these poor creatures, even if only for use during their stay here. The vision flits there still, for though I have supplied a few such things, I am as yet no further on with the 'bag' which I hope still to realise. But of this by-and-by.

I returned to the hospital, or rather to my share of it—for I have nothing to do with the men's wards, and only some of the women's—the following Friday. I felt quite at home this time. Looking into the first ward, I saw the poor blind girl lying half across her bed sobbing violently. No one seemed to notice her ; but at that moment a kindly looking person went past me quickly, and took the poor girl in her arms. 'I know, my poor child, I know,' I heard her say ; and I left them together, and told the nurse I would look in on my way back. My little lame girl was lying patiently behind the door, her face brightening with the hope of a picture-book I had promised to bring next time. She gave awe-struck looks at the sobbing girl and the pleasant-looking lady, who, I afterwards heard, was a district visitor, and knew the blind girl before.

'She's cried like that all day,' the child said in a whisper, 'ever since they told her.'

'What did they tell her ?'

'They came and told her her father was dead, and wasn't coming to see her any more.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said the nurse, coming up and stroking the child's hair : 'that's not the worst of it ;' and as I went out with her, she said : 'They should never have told the poor thing—there was no need. He hanged himself, ma'am, only last night. Hanged himself, O my God ! for want of a day's work ! A day of hard toil, hardly paid, would have saved his poor life ; or rather, please God, his reason, for that must have gone first.'

I said so to the poor daughter, later, sitting by her on the bed, trying to bring her to my own feeling, that he was past responsibility for his own death ; and that so she might think of him as at rest—no more need for work, no more waiting for what never came, no more hopeless seeking. The married sister came presently, crying and shaking, and I feared the effect of it all upon the poor girl's eyes and nerves ; but when I saw her next day, she

was quiet and calm, and not crying. The poor soon face their sorrows, and cease to bewail them aloud. In their own poor homes and busy toilsome lives, they have little time to grieve—well for them, perhaps, in some ways. But it is hard to be sorrowful and cold—sorrowful and hungry—not with the mere good appetite which disappears with anxiety and grief, but with the gnawing of exhaustion and long fasting ; to weep and work—weeping over wash-tubs and wet floors, and on their knees, and scrubbing with sore and bitter hearts—what must it be ?

I had found a little work for the mother of a consumptive child in another ward, and the news was received joyfully. I met the poor broken-down husband of the woman I saw last week coming down-stairs with his little girls, clean, decent, and orderly, but with another week's hunger and hopeless failure of work written on his sad white face. Since then, I have been to several builders, and decorators, and house-agents, begging for work for this man. The answer is always the same : 'We have dozens of our own hands unemployed, and if work came, we must give them the preference.'

I have quoted a few cases, and given but a faint and imperfect sketch of one kind of help that is greatly needed amongst the poor. In visiting hospitals, there is not only comfort and kindness to many sick and friendless people—men, women, and children—the kindly word, and the listening to the talk of their illness ; their troubles, their difficulties ; their future plans, and hopes, and fears ; the giving of newspapers and books ; of any old toys or picture-books to the children ; of tea and sugar, or snuff, to the old people ; a few pence for their washing—all of which costs but little, and contributes greatly to their consolation. Besides this, there is the religious reading, talking, or teaching, if there be inclination or need ; and then comes what, as I said at first, widens the work—the inquiry into their home circumstances and troubles : the brothers in trouble, in jail, in scrapes, in service ; sisters in sad straits, sickness, want, sorrow, degradation ; mothers and fathers out of work, or past work ; children in bad health, untaught, or wanting schooling.

So much might be done, if *many* would do a *little*. Ah, if only a hundred people would give a *shilling each*, I could send poor Mrs Dean to a convalescent home, where she could rest and get strength, and get her decent clothes to wear, when she applies for work at the theatre. It would not take a hundred shillings to do this ; and the rest would take poor Green down to the country, where he could get work ; and the change of air would give him fresh strength and hope. A few more shillings would give some wine and good food to a consumptive girl of fourteen, just turned out, but, alas, no better. A few more would pay for a decent lodging for a poor girl of twenty, whose soldier-husband is in Canada, and who broke her leg in two places falling down some steps. She will be turned out in a week, cured, which means that the bones are mended—too lame to walk alone, too weak to work, and penniless—no house and no friends in London—Irish again.

And then my vision of a bag, such a bag as is well known to district charities and mothers' meetings—under-linen of all kinds, old and worn or new, coarse or fine. If only each family would

give one garment, the bag would soon be filled. They should be marked 'Hospital,' and be claimed by the nurses when the patients leave the ward. Let them at least be clean and fresh while they are *there*—while they are ill and weak. It might give some of them (who can afford it) a taste for cleanliness when they go home.

In a few weeks, as one of three or four regular visitors at one hospital—amongst the women alone—I find my hands full. I cannot quite lose sight of the patients who leave, and new ones come in daily: this must go on increasing. My companions are of course in the same position. As I said before, we want help; and many could help us. The requisite items are money, time, tea and sugar, newspapers, books, toys, and old clothes. Those who can give nothing else can give their time; and almost everybody has old clothes to give away some time or other. Let them remember the bag. And, besides the bag, the patients are often in the direst need of clothing to take away. They have perhaps been ill for weeks before entering the hospital, and pawned all their available clothes for food, lodging, and medicine.

There are many charitably inclined, who, willing to give, do not know *where* to give. If they are in doubt, let them take to visiting a hospital, or give help to those who do. I would have such places visited, not because it is *hospital-visiting*, but because it is a means of discovering the wants of many poor.

Perhaps the greatest want as a charity now in London is a free convalescent and incurable hospital. No such hospital can be really useful and available that entails *waiting for votes*: to be serviceable it must be free. There are such places already, and most useful and excellent they are; but they are few and small, and totally inadequate to the need. Would that Mr Peabody would dedicate his next gift to this purpose. For want of such a refuge, I have searched London and the 'charities of London' in vain for a shelter for Mrs Dean, the poor actress, and several others this very week. Of some of these charities I may have occasion to write again. If any reader of this paper should feel disposed to assist in contributing in any way, however small, to the relief of these poor people, they may hear all particulars by writing to the initials 'S. D. H.' care of Mr Hayes, bookseller, Lyall Place, Eaton Square. *Any* help will be most acceptable. *Pence*, old clothes, a single garment, a pair of old boots—anything that can be spared, will be most thankfully acknowledged.

NODDY'S SITUATION.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.

SIX weeks had come and gone at Braithfield Villa. The advertisement had been inserted five times—but still no answer. A situation as governess is not the easiest thing to obtain. It is something like that of prime-minister—there are always plenty of candidates for the office, and most of the candidates (poor things) are about as well fitted for it.

Mr Frank had more than fulfilled Mrs Muciller's most sanguine anticipations. He had proved a most attentive cavalier to Julia. He paid respectful

deference to her piano performances and to her singing; indeed, he seemed particularly impressed with her rendering of *Twilight Twitterings—a Reverie*, by some noodle or other, that sounded very like fairies hammering in tin tacks. As for music! I am only surprised at Mr Frank's taste; but I suppose it came new to him on his return from India. He would lounge about, smoking, whilst Julia painted flowers or embroidered him a smoking-cap. He accompanied her in walks and rambles; he was her attendant at croquet parties, and picnics, and morning calls. Julia received these courtesies with artful unaffectedness, and her mother remarked them with inward satisfaction. Nothing afforded Mrs Muciller more sincere delight than when people began to couple Julia's name with Mr Geogagan's. They were not actually engaged, however; indeed, beyond the courtesies referred to, Mr Frank had made not the slightest attempt at anything more decisive. But still, people will talk, and Mrs Muciller liked to hear them. People began vaguely to suppose that Julia had made a fortunate hit, and that it was in all probability an accomplished fact; but they hesitated to do more than hint their belief, without something like foundation. Mrs Muciller, fully aware of the important part gossip plays in the history of daily life, determined to turn it to account. She reasoned thus: Mr Geogagan is evidently impressed with Julia, but he is a little shy, or dilatory, in coming to the point. In either case, a favourable rumour may do much in bringing about a desirable result. It may encourage him: it *must* stimulate him.

With this idea, in the course of her next private conversation with Mrs Sharing, when that lady inquired, with certain friendly nods and elevations of the eyebrows, if she might venture to offer congratulations on a certain fortunate event, Mrs Muciller gave her unmistakably to understand that she might, although perhaps expressed in that coy language of partial reserve with which women like to enhance the value of private communications.

Now, thought Mrs Muciller, I know Mrs Sharing to be the greatest gossip in the neighbourhood. She will be certain to spread the news of Julia's rumoured engagement far and wide. It will undoubtedly get round to Frank Geogagan, and will lead him at once to make that proposal for which he seems so ready. So the rumour shall make the fact, and the fact keep the rumour in countenance.

Meantime, the subject of Mrs Muciller's design appeared to be in most genial ignorance. He continued to pay the same respectful attentions to his charming cousin Julia. He took little notice of Noddy, as a consideration for the lady of the house indeed dictated, for he had more than once observed that any slight attention to Miss Cray was visited on her with a glance of disfavour from Mrs Muciller when she thought he was not looking. But Frank Geogagan had very quick restless eyes that could see round a corner.

As for Noddy, if she owned to herself one feeling at all about the matter, it was just one of sadness that a school-girl should render a *man* so artificial and constrained, and unlike his real self, as she

thought Mr Geogagan was becoming. But there was another feeling at the bottom of her heart, that Noddy would not own to herself. The wind bloweth where it listeth : you cannot tell whence it comes or how. There were Phœacian ships with sails ever set that carried their owners without oar or effort whithersoever they listed. And in these six weeks Noddy had come to love Mr Frank. She would not have confessed it to herself : she would have despised herself had she believed it. How was it ? Dear soul ! Is there any better reason to be given for loving anybody than the child's reason—Because I do ? Must we not all come back to that ? Noddy had seen few people ; few people had ever taken notice of her, or seemed to think of her as worth talking to or caring about. Mr Frank always had a word of some sort for her. Many a morning he would chat pleasantly to her as she dusted the room ; many a time he would refrain from speaking to her, or of her, before Mrs Muciller, for her sake. Well, you may say this, or you may put it how you will, but you will have to come back to the little child's reason at last, for all the wiser people in the world who have tried to give any better explanation have talked nonsense, and, what is more, owned it.

Frank Geogagan had made many friends in the neighbourhood, and it was not long before one of them congratulated him on his engagement to Julia Muciller. It staggered him at the first ; but, bless you ! Mr Frank had his eyes about him. He took it as coolly as possible ; never said a word to contradict it. He saw it would not do, as this would be a palpable reflection on Mrs Muciller, by whose tacit endorsement at least he ascertained such a report had obtained currency at all. He just smiled, and thanked his friends, and so gave renewed credence to the report, which now had received the final stamp of veracity. Mind, I do not defend Mr Frank's conduct ; I only state what he did : and now I am going to tell you what came of it.

Dear reader—you who have followed me thus far—do you think I am telling you fiction ? If so, I ought not to make Frank Geogagan a party after the fact to a deceit. There was once an audience that thought the squeak of Archippus more life-like than that of the real pig. Remember this.

The latter end of August, a picnic had been arranged to Cherleigh Lake—a most delightful jaunt, and Mrs Muciller, Julia, and her Indian lover were to go, of course. It so happened, however, at the very last minute, that important business required Mr Geogagan's attention in London. I need not further relate the nature of the business than to say it was understood to be something in connection with the Indian Reclamation of Land Company, and that it was urgent. It was not a letter that summoned Mr Geogagan, but a printed notice, stating that, in consequence of the sudden depreciation of shares (which had previously gone up many hundred per cent. above their paid-up value), a heavy call was to be made on the shareholders.

Mind—once more. It is not for me to defend Mr Geogagan. I take the facts as they come. I cannot apologise for facts, and won't. It was settled that Mrs Muciller and her daughter were to go to the picnic, while Mr Geogagan went to London to transact his business. Mr Frank never went near the metropolis at all ; he just marched

over to Mr Sharing's to smoke a cigar. And when the house was clear, Noddy sat down at her books to study teaching.

It has been said Mrs Muciller knew Mrs Sharing for a gossip. Mr Frank also knew Mr Sharing for one. With this knowledge, how it was he went and confided to such a man the state of his affairs, I must leave you to guess.

Over their cigars he stated something like this to Mr Sharing : 'The fact is this. Every penny I could get together I put into this Indian Land Reclamation scheme. The shares went up fabulously, till a hundred pounds became worth thousands. The scheme was feasible, and likely to succeed and to pay at any premium the shares could go to, it was so good. I had every confidence in it. Suddenly, a panic comes, the shares drop nearly to par before we in England can get the intelligence, and we are called on to pay up our amounts. Now, I know you are accustomed to advance money on security—will you lend me three thousand pounds on a deposit of shares to twice the amount ?'

'Ah, my young friend,' said Mr Sharing, 'you see that's your way and the way of yours, always. Here you go and mix yourself up in the rashest of speculations without a chance of success—as independent as you can be, all the time—you're all alike. Then you get into a hole, as we say—and you come to me to help you out. Look you ; your shares are not worth that—and he snapped his fingers—not worth the paper they are printed on. Three thousand pounds ? Three thousand fiddles, sir.'

'But,' said Mr Frank, 'it is only a temporary depression, owing to a panic : the scheme is a good one—the shares will go up again.'

'Yes, like a gunpowder mill ! The whole affair will explode—that will be the next rise, and the only one. I'm sorry for you—sorry for you, sir.' Mr Sharing gently emphasised his sorrow by tapping it out with his finger-points on the table—'thought you had better judgment. You are just like a moth. You have been dazzled with glittering prospect, and rushed straight into the flame. Now you complain that your wings are singed.'

'Pardon—I have not complained. I do not believe my case so bad as you represent, and I do not yet despair of making you see it in a different light. Rumour may have informed you that I have been so fortunate as to secure the affections of Miss Muciller. I have not made minute inquiries as to the amount of that young lady's fortune, not wishing to appear mercenary, but I have every reason to suppose, from the style in which her mother and herself are living, and from the fact of her being an only daughter, that she will receive a handsome portion on her marriage. If you take this into consideration, you may be disposed to look upon my security as at least sufficient to cover the loan I seek.'

Mr Sharing was silent for a minute. 'That is how the wind blows, is it ?' he thought. 'So you fancied you had got hold of a fortune, my fine fellow ; and Mrs Muciller, on her part, was of very much the same opinion respecting you. Why, the girl won't have a penny ! As if the style in which a woman lives, who has a daughter to marry, could be the least criterion of her means ! You know very little of the world, Mr Frank.' But he remarked aloud : 'I have certainly heard of your

happiness in that respect, but you will bear in mind you are not yet married to Miss Muciller. There's many a slip, you know. And in addition to this, I have every reason to believe that whatever may be the extent of Miss Muciller's fortune, it would be placed beyond her husband's control!—'That's about the neatest way I can put it without injuring the young lady,' he thought. 'For that matter, her fortune is beyond *anybody's* control!' And he smiled and tapped the table again.

'Well, sir?' said Mr Frank.

'Well, sir?'

'Then am I to understand that you refuse to entertain the question?'

'Entirely. I don't discount possibilities, but only extreme probabilities. It is not in my line.'

'I need not remind you, at anyrate, that the subject of our conversation is private,' said Mr Frank.

'And confidential. Certainly.—May I offer you another cigar?—No?—Well, if you must be going, good-morning, sir.'

'Private and confidential—stuff and nonsense!' Mr Sharing observed to himself, as soon as he was alone. 'That is all very fine, young gentleman—but it is right Mrs Muciller should get just a hint that her great catch is a very little fish, that had better be thrown into the river again. I will tell Mrs Sharing, and trust her to make use of the information.'

Mr Frank went back to Braithfield, and found Noddy sitting in the window, trying hard to perfect herself in the mysteries of the accordance of French *participes passés*. She was huddled up with her book in her lap, her elbows on her knees, and her head in her hands.

'Noddy!'

'What, not gone to London? Have you missed the train, Mr Geogagan?'

'No—neither: I was not going. Put on your bonnet, and come out for a walk.'

She hesitated.

'Come, put away your books. The walk will do you good, and Julia will not be jealous.'

Still she hesitated: she thought of Mrs Muciller.

'Come, Noddy; I am in difficulty and some trouble, and I think you can help me. So, put away those books.'

Noddy hesitated no longer. In two minutes, she was ready, and came down with a calm, wise expression on her little face, ready to help.

They set out, and walked for nearly half an hour without a word. Noddy remembered she was wanted for help or advice of some kind, and so was quiet, waiting to hear. Through pleasant corn-fields, glistening like seas of restless gold, while the warm summer breath passed over the ripe ears, and bowed them in long fleeting waves, wherein the cloud-shadows floated—wide, swelling waves that calmly rolled the sunshine along to cool reedy music, as the breeze played on the heavy grain—and burning poppies were upheaved or borne over by the chasing waves. By hedges, bright with summer flowers, and cool with ferns and creeping green. Along paths patterned over with the moving shadows of oak, and elm, and willow.

'Noddy, what would you say if I told you I was ruined?'

'I should say I didn't believe you.'

'All the property I have in India is in the

"Anglo-Waddy Company" for the reclamation of land from the sea. I doubt if I shall ever see a sixpence of it again. Mr Sharing told me to-day the share certificates are not worth the paper they are printed on.'

'Well,' said Noddy, 'I thought you said you were ruined. Is that all?'

'All?' he returned, rather sharply. 'Is it not enough to be ruined? Not a sixpence of it, not a penny-piece, shall I see again!'

'Oh,' Noddy said, half talking to herself, 'is that ruin? It seems to me a man is never ruined while he has life, and health, and strength, and cheerful courage.'

'It is easy to talk. You never had any money to lose.'

'No; not much. But I have a little property for all that.'

'Indeed. And, pray, how much?'

'Thirty pounds in the savings-bank, which my father left me.'

Mr Frank laughed, despite his own trouble.

'Dear me! I didn't know you were an heiress before. How you would grieve to lose your money!'

'I should be sorry.'

'Then you can't find fault with me for being the same at losing so many thousands.'

'The amount makes no difference. My thirty pounds is my all, and I should be just as sorry to lose it as you are at losing your all. But though I'm only a woman, I shouldn't say I was ruined—that is absurd.'

'You are a Job's comforter, at all events.'

'There are very few comforters like Job's, in these days,' said Noddy—'very few persons who would sit down in silent sympathy, the deepest of all sympathies, for three days and three nights with a friend.'

'So you look upon me as a friend?'

'Yes,' said Noddy, blushing a little, but displeased with herself for doing so, on account of an avowal so innocent.

'And can you give me any better advice than Job's friends?'

'Perhaps not.'

'Tell me what you think I ought to do.'

'Do?' said Noddy quickly. 'Go and work. It's a brave thing work is. You will forget all about being ruined, and only remember you are a *man*, doing a man's work. I don't know what I should do without work myself; it is the most soothing and refreshing comfort I know, even to me, and it must be better to a man. But your case is nothing like Job's. If it had been only his money Job had lost, his friends would just have staid at home, and sent messengers offering to help him to work, and Job is just the sort of man who would have been content to take it.'

'Noddy, I really believe you're right.'

'I'm sure I am. Haven't you seen me sweep?'

'Yes,' laughed Mr Frank; 'but that is hardly in my way—digging would come more natural than that.'

'Then dig. But there's plenty of work for earnest workers with brains without digging. I don't pretend to tell you the exact direction in which it lies, because that is out of my province; but I am sure you will find it, if you are in earnest.'

'I will,' said Mr Frank, and he was quiet again for a little.

And Noddy was quiet too. She had something on her mind she wished to say, but hardly liked to mention it. However, she began : 'If you mean what you say, you will not remain much longer here.'

'I shall not remain much longer here,' he echoed abstractedly.

'You will begin at once to strike out a new path, as a brave man should ; and you will walk as straight, and feel as proud as a man ought who feels he is neither ruined nor disgraced when he has only lost his money.'

'Gently, Noddy. People don't like to see much of this sort of thing in any but the rich.'

'Then people are wrong, and must be shewn so. But what I want to say is this : If you have lost all your money, you may have expenses to meet, and one thing and another that may harass you, and prevent your beginning clear.'

Mr Frank nodded. 'Quite so,' he said, and shook his head gravely.

'Well, would you mind—that is, if I lent you twenty pounds of my property, would you be certain sure to pay it back to me again somewhere ? I can't spare more very well, as I want ten pounds of it to get myself ready for the situation I am looking for. But I thought it might come in handy.'

'Just so,' said Mr Frank, and shook his head again gravely : 'there's no doubt about it.'

'You see, I should not have proposed it, but I should charge you interest, and that would do away with all obligation.'

'Entirely,' Mr Frank coincided : 'that would be a regular commercial transaction. And the interest would be ?'

'Three per cent.—the same as the bank gives.'

'And you would require my note of hand for the amount ?'

'No,' said Noddy, laughing at the idea as absurd ; 'I can trust you for that.'

'What ! for nearly all your property ?'

'Yes ; because it would not ruin *me* if I lost it.'

'Well, I will take your money, Noddy—it will be very acceptable—and I won't cheat you.'

'No,' Noddy said ; 'I hope you won't, for I look upon it as safe as the bank.'

Mr Frank laughed.

So it was settled that Noddy should draw her money from the bank on the following day.

'You are a good little friend, Noddy,' Mr Frank said, as they walked home.

'No,' Noddy said ; 'I hope I should have done as much for any one.'

Noddy meant to tell the truth. Maybe she 'hoped' she would ; but I am not at all certain she would. However, she had never before felt so rich as at the prospect of helping Mr Frank. Her twenty pounds seemed to her quite a large property, and she almost jumped to the conclusion that it would go a good way towards making a prosperous man of Mr Geogagan again.

Mrs Muciller and Julia returned from the picnic party rather bored. It was 'awfully slow,' Julia decided ; and 'so many stuck-up girls that it was quite horrid.'

Mr Geogagan spent the evening listening to Julia's music with as much apparent appreciation and interest as though he had not been unsuccessful in his attempt to raise the loan he wished from Mr Sharing.

CHAPTER IV.

One day passed—two days—three days, with little worthy of remark. Then Mrs Muciller, becoming impatient at receiving no replies to the advertisement respecting Norah Cray, made a call on Mrs Sharing to consult her about some immediate steps for getting Noddy out. At the close of her visit, Mrs Sharing imparted the bit of news she had been burning to tell, but yet treasured up for her last communication—namely, that on the most reliable authority, her Indian nephew was not worth a dozen rupees ; and that he had actually attempted to raise a loan on his prospects of marriage with Miss Muciller.

'Quite absurd, you know,' said Mrs Sharing ; 'but it just shews what he is worth.'

'But I know he has money,' Mrs Muciller protested indignantly. 'I'm certain of it. That Reclamation Company is a wonderfully good thing, and I know his money is in that. I have made every inquiry.'

'Exactly. But that is the very reason. The Anglo-Waddy Company has gone to entire ruin. My husband says the shares are not worth sixpence.'

This was a great blow for Mrs Muciller, especially remembering that she had only herself to blame for promulgating the report of Julia's engagement to this adventurer. The one little bit of comfort she had remaining was, that Mr Geogagan had been as much deceived in thinking Julia had expectations as she had been with him. But that did not mend the matter, which presented itself to her mind in the light of a most atrocious take in, and she said so.

'Well, but,' said Mrs Sharing, 'the company was prospering when he left India, and there is no reason to suppose he has been guilty of intentional deception.'

'What has that to do with it ? How does that make any reparation for the injury it has caused to my daughter's prospects ? Everybody knows of the engagement, and people will talk. Oh, how they will talk ! It is abominable ! It will be most prejudicial to Julia to break it off now ; but it must be done at any cost. And a most fortunate escape it will be.'

Mrs Muciller returned to tea at Braithfield Villa, outwardly calm and cool, but, as may be imagined, in not the most placid serenity of mind. She made not the slightest alteration in her behaviour to Mr Geogagan, who appeared in very fair spirits, and entirely unsuspicuous of the coming storm.

Mrs Muciller was a woman of quick action ; a course once resolved on with her was put into execution immediately. When tea was finished, she blandly requested Noddy and Julia to leave the room. Her manner of doing this was so marked, that had Mr Frank not been deeply interested in a book he was reading on the sofa, he might have had his suspicions aroused.

When they were alone, Mrs Muciller commenced : 'Mr Geogagan, will you do me the favour to pay attention to a few words I have to say ?'

'I am all attention,' said Mr Frank, dropping his book, and drawing himself comfortably on to the sofa-cushion.

'When you invited yourself as my guest, I had

not the slightest idea that you would place me in a false position.'

'Nor I,' said Mr Frank resignedly, his hands languidly crossed, with the air of a martyr.

'I had no idea that you would avail yourself of my hospitality to betray the confidence naturally reposed in a visitor.'

Mrs Muciller paused, expecting an answer; but Mr Frank was silent.

'Or,' she continued, 'I should not have extended towards you that hospitality. You will excuse my being plain, but it is my duty to be so.'

Mr Frank extended his hands and bent his head, as deprecating such an apology.

'Your conduct towards my daughter Julia has been most heartlessly cruel.'

'Excuse me,' said Mr Frank.

'Pardon me; I don't wish to be interrupted. Most heartlessly cruel. You have paid her marked attentions at home and abroad, and have given currency to a most undesirable report that you were engaged to her, without any reference whatever to my wishes or feelings. I do not, of course, pretend to know the extent to which you have influenced her mind, or the hold you may have succeeded in obtaining over her affections; but I must say you have no right to promulgate a report that, in my opinion, is injurious to my daughter's prospects.'

'I have paid your daughter no more attention than ordinary courtesy to a relative would dictate. As to an engagement, I have not thought it needful to make a reference to you on the subject, Mrs Muciller, not having had the slightest notion of such a thing, until I heard the report you allude to, which certainly did not originate from me.'

'It is most singular how such a report could have obtained currency had you given no occasion for it,' said Mrs Muciller.

'There I agree with you; and significant also,' said Mr Frank.

'And significant also. Had your attentions to Julia been restricted to home courtesies, it might have been less so. But when you seek, on the strength of such a report, previously disseminated by you, to use your rumoured engagement as the security on which to borrow money, it becomes still more than significant, it becomes conclusive of something that is detestably disgraceful.'

Mrs Muciller paused, wishing for an answer to a shot that combined truth and falsehood so deftly that she knew it would tell; but there was only one answer Mr Frank could have given at the moment. If it had been a man who had stung him like this, Mr Frank would have knocked him down; but as it was a lady, he was silent.

'In entering my household,' Mrs Muciller proceeded, 'you led me tacitly to understand that you were at least in as prosperous a position as I had reason to believe you were some years ago. It is useless to say you did not actually state this in so many words; you led me to believe it, and took no pains to dissipate such a belief. Such conduct I can only characterise as the basest duplicity. You then sought, by the cunning artifice of a hinted engagement with my daughter, to mortgage her expectations as well as to injure her prospects. Such a proceeding I can only stigmatise as contemptible and systematic villainy. Your future course, whilst you remain in my house'—

But Mr Frank just walked into the hall, took

his hat, and scribbling a pencilled address on an envelope, gave it to the servant for Miss Cray, and walked out, leaving his luggage and personal effects to be sent after him.

The note contained only an acknowledgment of the sum of twenty pounds borrowed from Norah.

SOLDIERS AS LABOURERS.

THERE is a problem waiting for solution, the decision concerning which will have much influence on the well-being of our people—namely, how can we most suitably treat our soldiers, so as to make them good members of society? In days not yet beyond the memory of persons now living, the British soldier was regarded as little better than food for powder; if he did his work well when fighting, the nation asked but very few questions concerning his behaviour or his treatment at other times. His trull was always ranked among the most worthless of her sex; while his oaths and his drunkenness, his ignorance and his brutality, were almost regarded as things of course. Happily, a great change has taken place in the tone of public feeling on these matters—due, in a marked degree, to the publicity which the press gave to the shortcomings of our military system in the Crimea. Fourteen years have passed away since that dreadful winter on the heights between Balaklava and Sebastopol; and they have been years of wonderful activity in all that concerns our army. Regarding the troops simply as fighting-men, the improvements in the belligerent appliances have been immense. New breech-loaders, new repeating-rifles, new revolver pistols, new conoidal bullets, new cartridges carrying their own detonating composition, new artillery of vast power and range, new projectiles of unprecedented hardness and efficiency, new time-fuses acting almost with the precision of clockwork—these have tended to make one soldier equal to many under the old régime. Then, the soldier, when on active service, has much to do besides fighting. For marching, his knapsack and accoutrements have been improved, and are likely to receive still further improvements. For the bivouac and encamping, many useful novelties have been introduced either in the materials or the construction of tents, huts, substitutes for beds, waterproof coverings, &c.; while the drainage and the water-supply receive an amount of attention which never used to be bestowed on those subjects. For barrack-life, sanitary arrangements are more and more sedulously studied—especially in the adoption of the Rev. Mr Moule's invention of the earth-closet, which the authorities in India describe as being almost invaluable in that hot and ill-drained country. For dress, the soldier is in better trim than in the old days of the 'clothing colonels,' when greatcoats were very spongy and boots very shaky. For food—thanks chiefly to improvements in the army cooking apparatus—he can have hot meats and fresh meats to an extent that he never used to dream of, and a larger allowance than formerly of warm and wholesome beverages. For his health, there are medical arrangements and comforts which gradually lessen the number of his sick days in the course of a year.

All this applies to the soldier on active service. Much of it is also applicable to the soldier in barracks; with several important additions. The barracks, one by one, are gradually being supplied with good gas-lighting, good warming arrangements, good ventilating, good draining and water-supply, good recreation and gymnastic rooms and courts, good reading and news rooms. Then, again, soldiers' wives are treated as respectable women. It is true that the state does not give quarters or rations to more than a limited number of women for each regiment; but when that number has been selected, the way in which they are treated is productive of vast improvement; the soldier can really have some of the comforts and ameliorating influences of a home, the magic of a tidy woman's handiwork replacing many of the rough and coarse ways of barrack-life. His children, too, share in the improvement, for the regimental schoolmaster (or schoolmistress) teaches the little ones, and instils into them habits which tend to their well-being.

Of course, all this cannot be done without expense. The English soldier is very costly, as our army estimates clearly enough shew; and the cost, too, is increasing; seeing that most of the ameliorations are a little more expensive than the older systems which they supersede. Nevertheless, the much-tried British taxpayer seldom objects to the charge, if it can be clearly shewn that the soldiers themselves, the rank and file of the army, are improved in health and efficiency and moral conduct by the changes gradually introduced. And, after all, there may not be more real expense in the end; for the nation can assuredly get more work, and more useful work, out of a soldier whose health and general conduct are well attended to, than out of a neglected, diseased, dissipated fellow, who is no comfort to himself, and no credit to anybody else.

There is another matter, quite apart from all those noticed above, which has an important bearing on the well-being of the soldier—this is, the profitable employment of some of his time when in barrack or camp during periods of peace. The artilleryman has his guns and gunnery apparatus to attend to, in addition to his own uniform and accoutrements; the cavalry soldier has his horse to attend to, and a somewhat onerous duty it is; but the foot-soldier of our line regiments has not much to do beyond attention to himself, in his dress, kit, accoutrements, drill, &c. A question arises, whether some of his spare time could be profitably bestowed on handicraft employment, either as an artisan or as a labourer? Many of the men had been apprenticed to, or engaged in, mechanical trades before they enlisted; while all could do something or other as labourers. This subject is not altogether a new one to readers of the *Journal*. Six years ago, we noticed it. We passed in review certain plans which had been partially carried into effect for employing soldiers in useful works. A military commission, two years earlier, had gone into the matter pretty fully, with a view of reporting on the practicability of teaching useful trades to soldiers, their sons, and their daughters, and of furnishing employment for the persons thus taught. The commissioners were asked to collect such information as would enable them to express an opinion—‘whether the system pursued should be garrison or regimental; at what

garrisons or dépôts it should first be tried; what buildings it would be necessary to provide, at what cost, and how to be defrayed; what tools should be provided, and how paid for; how materials should be purchased and accounted for; what rate of payment the trade-teachers should receive, and out of what fund; what prices should be charged and paid for work done; the kinds of trade to be taught and practised; the kinds of encouragement best to be given to induce soldiers to learn; the best mode of disposing of the profits; the keeping and auditing of the accounts; the degree to which such artisan-soldiers might usefully be employed upon barrack repairs and other public works; and the general regulations that would be necessary for carrying out the whole system.’ The officers of every military district in the kingdom were applied to for information on the subject; they almost uniformly viewed the scheme favourably; and we gave* an epitome of the plan which the commissioners recommended. The progress made by 1863 was limited to barrack repairs at Aldershot. Since then, troops stationed in India have done most effective work in road-making; they have made long mountain-roads in the important strategical region between the Punjab and the Afghan frontier, available for armies and heavy guns in time of war, and for merchandise traffic in time of peace. This work, it was clearly ascertained, was done more cheaply by the troops than it would have been by private contract; while the men themselves were more healthy, more cheerful, and provided with a pleasant addition to their small supply of pocket-money.

It is satisfactory to find, from information recently made public by the War Office, that the military authorities continue to employ soldiers in barrack and in camp in a useful way, for barrack repairs and new works of moderate extent. Not much has yet been done in the way of actually teaching trades to the men; but such as already shew some tact as artificers, especially in the building trades, have been employed to a considerable extent. The Sappers, as may be supposed, are more serviceable in this way than the rank and file of the foot-regiments; for the Sappers are, almost to a man, good artisans, and are remarkably steady and intelligent fellows.

Let us see what some of the Reports say. Colonel Lothian Nicholson, Adjutant-general of Royal Engineers, speaking of the operations at the Curragh Camp in Ireland in 1863, says: ‘The employment of the labour of soldiers at the Curragh Camp during the past year has produced the most satisfactory results. The barrack incidental repairs of about half of the buildings have been well and expeditiously performed by soldiers of the Royal Engineers (Sappers) and line regiments, at a saving of nearly forty per cent. of the total cost to the public. Soldiers have also been employed on new works; and it has been found that in large services, where the work is of a straightforward character, a great percentage of saving can be effected. My opinion is, that such a system as that now in full work at the Curragh, when in the hands of thoroughly capable officers of Royal Engineers, assisted by trained non-commissioned officers of Sappers, may be extended to all barracks in occupation, with the sole proviso that the moves of troops

take place at rare intervals.' This and another proviso are dwelt upon with some force: 'As long as the troops remain in any particular barrack only for a short time, it would be impossible to extend the system; and I would further remark that it would not be possible to carry out the system of military labour fully, unless the skilled labour supplied by regiments of the line can be supplemented by Sappers, and superintended entirely by officers and non-commissioned officers of Royal Engineers.'

There appear to have been many varieties of work included in that which Colonel Nicholson here speaks of—such as external painting, repairs prior to painting, field-officers' quarters, canvassing and papering officers' rooms, repairing the angles and sills of huts, renewing drying-posts, alterations in the sergeants' mess-rooms, repairing machicolis, additions to the postmasters' quarters and the chaplains' quarters, reading and recreation rooms, providing pack store, ventilation of cells, married soldiers' quarters, incidental barrack repairs, incidental hospital repairs, repairing targets and rifle-ranges, repairing roads and improving the surface of the Curragh.

Colonel Chesney, reporting as to Aldershot, dwells on the importance of employing Sappers as skilled artificers, and soldiers of the line as labourers. Of the former he says: 'Under proper superintendence, at a station like this, their employment should save from twenty to fifty per cent. It has saved fifty on some large jobs performed here during the period of my observation. Of the line soldiers, serving as labourers, he adds: 'Their labour in this form has effected a saving varying from ten per cent. on incidental repairs to fifty per cent. on some new works.' He offers grounds for believing that it is not so well worth while to employ Sappers as labourers or line soldiers as artificers.

Lieutenant M'Hardy, in relation to the military establishment at Parkhurst, tells us that 'the result which has attended the employment of the labour of soldiers on barrack incidental repairs has been very satisfactory; the works have been properly performed, and with expedition. The percentage would be thirty-five per cent. of saving by employing the soldiers instead of a contractor. He confirms the opinion of Colonel Nicholson that the system is most usefully adopted when a regiment is stationed for some considerable time at one spot; it is not so well adapted for battalion depôts, where the men come and go frequently.'

Lastly, Colonel Driscoll Gosset, reporting on the operation of the system at Woolwich, says: 'The saving due to the employment of soldiers on incidental barrack services at Woolwich has been about twenty per cent., compared with contractors' charges. The works have been as well and quite as expeditiously performed as if done by a civilian contractor's agency. On new works, the saving has been about twenty-five per cent.' Until June 1868, it appears, only Sappers were employed at Woolwich on such works; but since then soldiers of the line regiments have been added, with a thoroughly satisfactory result; and Colonel Gosset remarks: 'A continuance of the system on a larger scale will, I am certain, develop its advantages in a higher degree.'

There is thus every reasonable ground for satisfaction at the result of the industrial employment

of our soldiers. The nation, unless all the above-named officers are strangely in error, saves money by it; while the men are unquestionably more orderly, cheerful, and contented in their position.

A COUNTY FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXXI.—UNCLE DEAN.

THE next day Mr William's conduct still shewed signs of grace. He was silent; but then in his case silence was indeed golden, though his speech could scarcely have been described as 'silvern,' but rather as small change in brass. He not only made no objection to the family migration to 'the Fishery,' which it was arranged at breakfast should take place on the ensuing day, but evinced a strong desire to depart at once: 'Why couldn't they go that very afternoon?'

This could not be done at such short notice, because of certain arrangements necessary to be effected for the invalid; but it was suggested by Mrs Blackburn that all was ready at the cottage, if William liked to precede the party by four-and-twenty hours, and establish himself there alone. But this he would by no means listen to; he would wait and travel with the rest. His sociability was so extreme as to become almost oppressive to poor Mr Waller, to whom he chiefly attached himself. 'I like to hear you talk, Waller, you have got such capital stories: be lively, there's a good fellow, because I feel rather down in the mouth, and as if, somehow, I was going to be ill.'

It was rather difficult to be lively under such depressing circumstances, and especially as his companion did not exhibit the slightest appreciation of his efforts, or indeed appear to listen to one word he said. His eye was on the watch, his ear was on the stretch, for that expected some one, more than ever.

Yet, when the footman came into the room where they were sitting late in the afternoon, with: 'You are wanted, if you please, sir, by a person in the front hall,' Mr William seemed by no means relieved by that indefinite summons. On the contrary, his lips grew white, and his jaw fell, so that he could not utter a word; and it was ready Mr Waller who put the question for him: 'What sort of a person is it, John, and what is his business?' 'Well, sir, he said he wouldn't give his name, but that Mr William knew all about him. I think he's some sort of a horsey gent.'

'Yes, yes,' said William with a testiness which the sharp eyes of the ex-M.P. at once perceived was assumed to conceal a sense of relief, 'I know the fellow. I have been expecting him this long time. It's a disagreeable business.—I am afraid I must see him alone, Waller.—John, if there is no one in the drawing-room, shew him in there; and in a few minutes the young Squire was face to face in that gorgeous saloon with the man who had known him in his least prosperous days, and who knew his secret, but to whom, as we have seen, he had made up his mind not to give a sixpence of hush-money, and to carry matters with high hand.'

Still, Mr William's manner was far from that of one who wishes to pick a quarrel, or even to maintain a frigid isolation, as he rose and shook hands

with Uncle Dean. This gentleman, whom circumstances had associated with horse-flesh, and whose tight-fitting trousers and sporting scarf-pin had doubtless led the footman to that just conclusion, had certainly not been intended by nature for the saddle. He was upwards of six feet high, and of great weight, if there is any truth in the adage: 'It is bone that weighs,' but, whether from the constant habit of physical 'jockeying'—that leaning forward to hustle with the reins—or from that moral 'jockeying' which requires an earthward vision and close inspection of one's fellow-creatures, his back was bent into a bow, which, assisted by the quick, searching glance that he bestowed upon his nephew by marriage, made him look one huge note of interrogation. He had placed a deep band of crape round his hat, in token of his sorrow for the loss of their common relative; but his long waistcoat was bright yellow, his trousers green, and his scarf a brilliant blue. Perhaps the poetry of his nature, forbidden an outlet through the usual channel, exhibited and expanded itself in colour, but certainly he was very highly tinted; nor was it his own fault, but Time's, that the hair which had been red was now quite gray.

'How are you, Dean? It was kind of you to come and look me up. I am only sorry that the house is full, so that I cannot ask you to take a bed.'

'Don't mention it, Mr Blackburn, don't mention it. I had no idea of sponging on you to that extent, I do assure you; but being in the neighbourhood, and wishing to hear about poor Bess.'

'That's a sad story, Dean,' broke in the other hastily, 'and I don't wish to talk about it. Take some wine—take some gin.—Here, what's your name? bring this gentleman some gin and hot water.—That used to be your tipple, did it not?'

'Why, yes, and yours too, in the old days,' said Mr Dean slyly; 'but there, I suppose with the run of the cellars of a place like this, you never touch anything worse than champagne and brandy. Dear, dear, what a change it seems! Richardson and I were talking over it only the other evening.'

'Richardson is an infernal scoundrel,' observed Mr William bluntly.

'Well, he does run a little near the wind at times, no doubt. But so we all do, for the matter of that, or *have done*, eh, Mr Blackburn? As he was saying, only think of your being here a squire, and a magistrate, I suppose, and all the rest of it; sending poor folks to prison. Lor, what a game it is!'

'Yes, Mr Dean, and it's a game that I have taken care shall not be spoiled by any man,' said the other slowly. 'I felt, of course, that I need never fear any molestation from *you*; but knowing what sort of a man Richardson was, and how like him it would be to hold over my head, as it were, for the purpose of extorting money, that trouble I got into at Chester, I made up my mind, upon assuming my position here, to make a clean breast of it at once.'

'You don't mean to tell me that all these fine folks about here know that you were in that horse-job, and got?' (Mr Dean looked cautiously round the room, and the shining faces of the inlaid cabinets and gilded mirrors seemed to make him more cautious, for his voice sank to a whisper)—'got put into quod?'

'Yes, I do,' said Mr William boldly. 'I don't say that the servants and village people have been told, but everybody with whom the knowledge of such a circumstance could do me harm was put into possession of it at once. Of course, it did do me harm, but the worst is past, and the ground on which I stand at least is firm.—If you still doubt me,' for the other wore a very incredulous look, 'ask Mr Herbert Stanhope, whom, I suppose, you know, and who is staying here at present.'

As Uncle Dean sat rubbing his chin with his large hand, you might have thought that his face was made of india-rubber, and that he was pulling it out inches at a time, so obviously did it lengthen at these words. It was evident to him that the moral lever which he had brought with him to work upon his nephew-by-marriage would have no mechanical force.

'So Mr Stanhope is with you, is he?' observed he slowly. 'I know of more than one "party" that would be glad to know where he was.'

'Owe money, does he?'

'Money! He owes a fortune. *Gazebo* must have cost him twenty or thirty thousand pounds at Goodwood; that is, he would have cost him, if he could have paid it. The idea is that he is gone abroad for a time, and that when he comes back he will settle everything; and Sporting Dawlish sticks by him in that story. But, there, since Mr Stanhope is a friend of yours, I'm mum.—What a fine room this is, Mr Blackburn, and what a fine place! Lor, if my poor Bess could but rise out of her grave—What's the matter, sir?'

'Matter, man!' cried Mr William, trembling violently—'did not I tell you not to talk about her, not to speak upon that subject? If she happened to be alive, I couldn't stop you; I am quite aware of that. You would have been coming over here a dozen times a year to borrow money of me, upon the score of our relationship. But, mark me! if ever I give you a farthing—and I don't say I will, mind—it must be upon the distinct understanding that you never breathe a word about—about your late niece.—The fact is,' and here Mr William began to whine and whimper, 'you may believe it or not as you please, Dean, but I was not altogether a good husband to that poor girl; I was harsh and rough with her at times; and now she's gone, I can't bear to think about it.'

'And she was a delicate creetur too,' said Mr Dean, shaking his head. Poor Bess had been really his own niece, and perhaps his conscience pricked him in that he had not been altogether a good uncle to her; or perhaps he only wished to exaggerate the case, as a question for damages. 'As delicate a creetur as ever I saw.'

'Just so,' said Mr William. 'She died of a consumption, with which she had long been threatened, out in foreign parts. The whole matter is one with which all my people are well acquainted, but of which they do not speak, because they know it pains me. You will oblige me, therefore, Mr Dean, by being silent also. There is nothing to be gained by speaking of it, either to me or any one else, you understand that, I suppose?'

Uncle Dean nodded assent; he had carefully gone over that idea, with an eye to business, and had been obliged to come to the conclusion, that no profit could be made out of a relationship that had become extinct. It had afforded him an excuse for his present visit (the real object of which had

been precisely what his nephew had foreseen), and nothing more could reasonably be expected of it.

'Very well,' said Mr William, 'you will distinctly bear in mind, then, that any present which I may think fit to make you now, or hereafter, is neither a tax nor a due. I fear no menace, as you may tell that scoundrel Richardson, if you please—and I acknowledge no claim in respect of our late connection by marriage.'

'I see that, sir, all quite plain,' answered Mr Dean deferentially. 'I am quite sure you have no call to help me with a shilling—though, if Bess had been alive, and knew that her poor uncle, who brought her up from childhood, was so devilish hard up as he is just now'—

'There, there; that will do, Mr Dean: I was quite aware that we were coming to that at last. Well, I had a hundred pounds with your niece when I married her, and I don't say but that I may be induced to refund it to you, as her representative, upon a certain condition.'

'I'll take my solemn oath, Mr Blackburn, that I'll never speak of Bess again as long as I live, if *that* is what you want. Of course, if you're going to marry again (as I hear is the case), you don't want people to go tittle-tattling all over the county about your late wife and her humble station just now.'

'Excuse me, Mr Dean,' said the other peremptorily, 'you would seem to imply that your silence is of some material importance to me; whereas no word of yours respecting your late niece could affect my interest in the smallest degree. It is merely a question of sentiment. I have asked you, as a favour, to avoid in future all mention of a certain subject, though I do not deny that you may have hit upon my reason for so doing. The condition I would impose is something quite different. You say that you know more than one party to whom Mr Herbert Stanhope owes large sums, and who would be glad to know of his whereabouts.'

'Yes, Mr Blackburn, I do; but I'll be mum as death for your sake—and in consideration of that hundred pounds you speak of.'

'Be so good as to hear me out, Mr Dean. You say that Mr Stanhope owes in all twenty or thirty thousand pounds. How is it he has not been declared a defaulter?'

'Well, it's all Mr Dawlish's doing, that is. He has the ear of some of our big men, and has persuaded them to wait; but there's others as I know of as have a matter of eleven thousand, or perhaps twelve thousand pounds in all, against Mr Stanhope, and they're hungry enough, I can tell you. They have been told it will be better for them not to press matters; but that don't stay their stomachs, you see, and they would like to know what I know, most uncommon. It's so precious difficult, you see, to get hold of a chap abroad.'

'Just so. I will write you a cheque for fifty pounds, Mr Dean, upon the understanding that you tell them (not from me, of course, but as a piece of information you happen to have obtained) that Mr Herbert Stanhope is staying *here*. Let them press him as hard as they please. Do you comprehend, man?'

'Very good, Mr Blackburn; but'—Uncle Dean hesitated a moment, and it is possible that across his untutored mind there flitted some crude notion of violated hospitality—'I warn you that they'll

make it very hot for him. Once they think they have been deceived, they'll be as eager as a pack of hounds who have been thrown off the scent, and suddenly find it breast-high. They'll be fit to tear him to pieces.'

'Let them tear him,' said Mr William sullenly. 'When you have set them on, but not before, I'll send you the cheque for the other fifty.'

'You may consider that as good as done, Mr Blackburn,' said Uncle Dean as he drained his glass and rose from his chair. 'If you have no other commands for me, it is time that I should be off.'

'As you please, Mr Dean. This is a sick-house, or I should have been glad to offer you something more of hospitality. I have guests who, I do assure you, are less welcome. Perhaps, by the way, it will be well that you should see one of them, whose voice I can hear upon the terrace yonder, with your own eyes; you will not then need to speak from hearsay.' Mr William pointed to the window, and bidding the other to look out without being observed, asked him what he saw.

'I see a very pretty young woman, and a young man who has his back to me, but is evidently making himself most uncommon agreeable to her. I should say there was love in the case on one side, at the very least.—Now he turns; yes, that's my man, sure enough; and I confess I'm sorry for it, Mr Blackburn; for Mr Stanhope was ever an open-handed young gentleman so long as there was any'—

'Here is a cheque for the fifty,' interrupted the other coolly. 'And now I will shew you to your vehicle by the back way, since it's just as well our young friend yonder should not know to whom he is indebted for whatever happens.—Good-bye, Dean, and remember the sooner you set about your work the sooner you will get your pay.—Yes, yes,' muttered Mr William as he re-entered the house alone, 'I'll put a spoke in Mr Stanhope's wheel for him: *twice* has he interfered in my affairs; so that I shall owe him one even when these hornets come about him.'

He turned into the little room where he had left Mr Waller; but that gentleman, as soon as he had got released from his companion, had incontinently fled. It was growing dusk, and solitude was so insupportable to the young Squire, that he hastened to join the pair upon the terrace, notwithstanding that they were the two individuals whom, of all the unloved world, he liked the least. But at the open Hall door he stopped, petrified with amazement at what he saw upon the terrace. As Uncle Dean had described it, there was indeed a young man making himself so very agreeable to a young woman that it seemed that love must be upon one side at least: he was leaning forward and speaking eloquently, if not passionately, into her very ear, while she, though shaking her fair head with gravity, by no means had the appearance of inflexible denial. He seemed rather to be excusing himself for some course of conduct which she was reprobating, yet not without holding out a hope of pardon. But what had turned Mr William into stone, as though it were a Gorgon's head, and had also transformed his features into some likeness of a Gorgon, was this, that the object of these marked attentions of Mr Herbert Stanhope was not Ellen, as of course her uncle had expected it to be, but Lucy Waller!

CHAPTER XXXII.—THE JOURNEY.

Surely it is one of the most extravagant weaknesses of the human heart to set its affections on an object which does not reciprocate them; we may indeed love a child without our care and devotion being appreciated, or indeed any particular regard being shewn to us in return; but in the case of a grown-up woman, how can a man be so foolish as to press his attentions where they are not desired, and where, therefore, they must needs be displeasing?

Although one would think that a very little self-conceit, or proper pride, would cause such a suitor to give up his quest at once, it is not usually a symptom of humility to persevere, but rather of a coarse and vehement will. Mr William Blackburn, for instance, as we have seen, was by no means of Sir John Suckling's opinion:

If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?

but coveted Lucy all the more that she, on her part, exhibited no sort of inclination for him. The scene he had witnessed on the terrace transported him for the time with rage, and laid up in his mind a third occasion of hatred against Herbert Stanhope, in comparison with which the two already garnered there were but slight. It was likely enough, indeed, that he might have been mistaken as to the cause of that gentleman's warmth of manner towards a young lady who had been his friend and neighbour from childhood, and, on the other hand, Lucy herself had certainly manifested no corresponding emotion; but when was jealousy capable of reflection? Under the circumstances, it was wonderful that William Blackburn was able to conceal the anger that consumed him; but the fact was the spectacle he had witnessed was not altogether without its mitigation: he felt himself tolerably secure of Lucy, since her father's fortunes depended upon her consent; and he was not displeased, for a certain reason, to persuade himself that Stanhope was not personally devoted to Ellen. At all events, Mr William's manner continued as urban as we have observed it to be for the last four-and-twenty hours, and his inclination for society as strong; of this latter, the following was a curious example. Mr Waller and his daughter had departed the next morning for Mosedale, upon the understanding that they should spend the ensuing day at the Fishery, and Mr Stanhope accompanied them as far as Curlew Hall, where he had business to occupy him for a few hours; so that the Blackburn family were for once left to themselves.

'I suppose, Willy, you will take the mare over to the cottage?' said Mrs Blackburn after her guests had departed. 'You will have a charming ride across the moor.'

'Why so?' inquired he sharply. 'Why should I not drive with you?'

'Well, of course, my darling, we should be only too glad of your company; but then, you see, there is but room for two in the invalid carriage which takes your poor father.'

'Then let Ellen go in that, and do you come with me in the brougham. We have never yet ridden in our own carriage together, you and I.'

Mrs Blackburn hesitated: perhaps it struck her, that if not now, she would probably never again

drive with her Anthony, and that it was to him that her duty was first owed; but she gave way as usual, and the brougham was ordered accordingly. Only she did insist upon its following the other vehicle, in place of preceding it. Her son, whose desire to get away from Redcombe seemed to grow stronger every hour, would have had it driven at a quicker rate, 'so as,' said he, 'to be at the cottage beforehand, and get all things ready for the governor.'

But his mother was firm in adhering to her own plan. 'Everything is quite prepared there, Willy, and I will not consent to be separated from your father more than has been already done. Think if anything should happen to him on the way, and I were not close at hand, could I ever forgive myself?'

And so, not unlike a funeral procession, the invalid carriage, with its motionless occupant and Ellen, took the lead, while the brougham followed at the same slow pace. The villagers lined the little street in mournful silence. The short experience they had had of the old Squire's rule had been a favourable one, and they had every reason to expect less good at his successor's hands. As for the report of the estate having been left to Miss Ellen, they did not credit it: the Blackburn land had always gone from father to son. It was indeed a melancholy exodus. It was observed that Mr William was very pale and awed, and exhibited much more feeling than he had been supposed to possess. Singular to say, this not only continued to be the case with him, but he even grew more serious as they proceeded on their journey. In vain his mother endeavoured to console him. 'You must not give way so, dear Willy, although I am glad to see you so deeply touched. It is rather for me to weep, who must soon lose the friend and lover of fifty years yonder. The last time, yes, the very last that he and I journeyed together this way!— The poor lady could not finish the sentence; the memory of the past was too bitter to be shaped in speech: it was a fact that the last time she and Anthony had taken the Mosedale Road together was on their way to be married, when they were little more than boy and girl. There are probably but few old people, even of the most unsentimental sort, on whom at times some thought of this kind must not intrude, more affecting, surely, than any grief which self-conscious youth imagines or supposes. Perhaps the springs of regret are as fast frozen in their case as those of passion? Heaven grant it may be so.

There was one consideration that certainly tended to Mrs Blackburn's comfort—the universal sense of her husband's hopeless condition confined her own apprehensions to that channel, and removed her anxiety with respect to her son. If any warning of approaching death had really been sent through her to the House of Blackburn, it must surely needs have relation to the poor Squire, whom all men thus regarded as a doomed and dying man. It was in continuation of this idea, so strong in its possession of her mind that she was probably ignorant of not having given it expression, that she suddenly whispered, as they drew near the termination of the moorland: 'We are getting near the very place now, Willy.' Her son had been leaning back with closed eyes, but he opened them at those words, and turned upon her a face of ghostly horror.

'Don't fear, Willie,' said she, herself greatly alarmed at his appearance, inasmuch as he had hitherto affected to speak of the matter with contemptuous disbelief: 'it is your poor father who has been sent for, if anybody, and not you, darling. I feel quite sure of that, except when you look so strange as you are doing now.—What on earth ails you, Willy?'

'Nothing, nothing,' gasped he.—'Why don't they drive faster? They are stopping, they are stopping, I tell you. What do they see?'

'Stopping?' cried his mother: 'then something has happened to Anthony; O dear! O dear!' and as the brougham pulled up, she opened the door, and got out quickly.

'Stay here, stay with me,' cried William wildly: 'I will not be left alone.'

But she was already out of hearing.

After all, the leading carriage had but stopped on the brow of the steep Redmoor hill to put the drag on; but Mrs Blackburn seized the opportunity to look in upon the invalid. Was it her fancy, or had the passing through the air really revived him somewhat from that long lethargy, and even called up a tinge of colour in his pallid cheeks? Or was it possible that the scent of the fir-grove, or the sight of its gentle waving tops, had in his mind also awakened a reminiscence? Certainly his eyes welcomed his wife with a glance of ineffable tenderness, such as they had not shed for many a day.

'I think he would like you to get in and sit by his side, grandmother,' whispered Ellen earnestly.

'I will, I will,' replied she. 'But do you take my place with Willy. Your uncle is not well, Ellen; look to him.'

Her grandmother and she therefore changed places. It was the first time for weeks that Ellen had been left alone with her uncle, and she shrank from the idea of his rough companionship; but, to her astonishment, he seemed pleased to see her, and scarcely to notice that she was his mother's substitute. She was about to explain why she had left the other carriage, but he interrupted her with incoherent words: 'Quite right. Good girl, good girl. We are moving now. Faster, faster! Why do they linger? Let me hold your hand,' and he took her fingers in his own, and clasped them tight. 'Are we down the hill yet? Have we passed the—the fir-grove? Is the moorland out of sight? For again he had closed his eyes, as though unwilling to look out upon the landscape.

'We are nearly down the hill, uncle,' answered Ellen quietly, though in extreme surprise; 'the moor is out of sight, and I can only just catch the top of the embankment of the reservoir. Now we are stopping once more to take the drag off. The valley lies open before us, and there is Mosedale Church spire.' She went on talking, not for talking's sake, but with that desire which seizes us when alone with those with whom we are ill at ease, to avoid silence. 'It is certainly warmer here than at Redcombe; it seems as though we were miles and miles away already. How green and summer-like are these fields and woods!'

'Ay, so they are. It looks quite different, as you say. The air is better too; I felt so oppressed just now—it was the warmth of the fir-grove, I suppose—that I could hardly breathe. Did I not look ill? Did I not say foolish things? I think I must have been half-fainting.'

'You looked very pale, uncle, but seem much

better now. As you say, the air is delightful, though it is surely not so fresh as on the moorland. Heaven grant it may do grandfather some good!'

'Just so: it's lovely. I think I'll just smoke a pipe. Tobacco always does me so much good. I'm deuced glad we have left Redcombe, for I think the place was beginning to disagree with me; at least I feel uncommonly hopped.'

'It has been a sad house of late to all of us,' sighed Ellen. 'First, the tidings of poor Aunt Bess's death! What a kind heart she had, and how she loved you, uncle! I can scarcely picture to myself that she is really dead; and I sometimes think'— She hesitated.

'Think what?' interrupted William fiercely.

'Well, perhaps it's wrong, uncle; but I sometimes think that if she had been amongst us, and lived at home, and especially as we live now, no longer pinched and worried by poverty, she might have been spared to us yet. Dear patient, loving Bess, I seem to see her now!'

'Don't be a fool,' cried Uncle William angrily. 'Why do you talk about a subject which you know I detest? That is, one that is naturally painful to me. You are worse than your grandmother: she is always talking about dying people, as if I could help the governor's being in such a bad way. Is it not enough to be with him all day, without coming down-stairs and telling other people all about it, so as to make their flesh creep?'

'You see, uncle, dear grandmother finds it hard to get poor grandfather out of her thoughts.'

'So it seems, indeed. But that reminds me—I daresay *you*, Miss Ellen, are not so entirely wrapped up in your grandfather's state of health (however much you may be interested by his *death*) as not sometimes to think of other things—such as marriage, for instance.—There, you are turning quite red, which is as good as a "yes." Well, I daresay you think yourself quite sure of your young man—that you have only got to whistle to him when you want him. But don't you be too sure; that's all I say.'

Ellen was indeed blushing scarlet, but it was with contemptuous indignation at her uncle's words. She had for the moment forgotten the very existence of the person to whom he was alluding.

'I say,' continued Mr William, 'you may be cut out by somebody whom you little suspect, if you are not civil to that fellow Stanhope—as civil as I am to Lucy, for instance.'

'How can you talk of Lucy, uncle, in that way,' cried Ellen passionately, 'with dear Aunt Bess scarce cold in her grave?'

There was a long pause; the allusion was certainly not without its effect upon the widower; his face once more assumed a ghostly pallor, and even his lips turned white. Ellen began to think that she had given him too sharp a shock.

'Look here,' said he huskily; 'just mark me, once for all, you slut: you mind your own business. It is about your own affairs, not mine, that I am talking to you. You are not holding this man Stanhope tight enough in hand.'

'Mr Stanhope is nothing to me, uncle,' said Ellen firmly.

'Ay, but he is, though; and he shall be too, at all events for the present. Don't you know what your grandfather wishes, miss, and ain't I here, as it were, in the place of your grandfather? You had better not make an enemy of me, I promise

you.' He grasped her roughly by the wrist, and wore his ugliest look. 'I am not going to be thwarted by any living soul. Do you hear *that*? If I think it well that you shall have this man, you *shall* have him; and if not, *not*. You are to hold him now fast, now loose, just as I tell you; or, by Heaven! it will be the worse for you. You don't know me yet, or— Confound the wench, if she has not fainted right off! I'm glad I've given her a good fright, however; and here's the Curlew with plenty of water to bring her round.'

The next minute they had crossed the bridge over the stream; and the Fishery with its little garden lay immediately before them—as fair a dwelling as was ever seen by river-side.'

CONCARNEAU.

LAST summer, during a tour through Lower Brittany, we visited Concarneau, for the purpose of seeing the sardine-fishery. But though the capture of the sardine, and its preparation for the market, is a sight in itself well worth the trouble of a journey to Brittany, still, we considered the greatest attraction at Concarneau is the establishment for breeding and observing the habits of fish. The *viviers*, as these large aquaria are called, are supported by government—that is, they are under the management of government; but the official who has the charge of them informed us that the sale of the fish more than supported the cost of the establishment. The *viviers* are a series of large tanks about ten feet deep, cut out of the solid rock. The depth of water in them varies from two to three feet. In the side of each tank there is a flight of steps, roughly hewn in the rock leading down to the level of the water. The floor of the tanks is of sea-sand, and the water is supplied by a pump, which is worked by a small windmill. The first tank which we visited was full of lobsters of all sizes. Into this tank all the lobsters are turned as soon as they are old enough and strong enough to hold their own against their cannibal brethren. Our obliging conductor informed us that the lobster took five years in arriving at maturity, and that the female lobster then, for the first time, took upon herself the cares of maternity. As soon as a female is observed to have laid her spawn, which, as we all know, she carries about with her between her numerous legs, she is caught in a small net, and placed in a separate tank. This tank was partly covered over, most probably to protect the young from the glare of the sun. Here the eggs are hatched, and the young lobsters have plenty of room to grow without running the risk of being devoured. A pail was let down into this tank, and when it was drawn up, we could see that the water was full of tiny lobsters, who, strange to say, instead of being dark blue in colour, like their parents, were bright red, and looked as if they had been boiled. Adjoining the lobster tank is one devoted to the cultivation of the crayfish, and the whole surface of the water was bristling with the antennæ of these formidable-looking crustaceans. In spite of its very forbidding appearance, the crayfish is in some places almost in as great request as the lobster.

The curator next shewed us the turbot tank, in which, he said, there were more than a thousand turbot of various sizes. 'Surely Monsieur has made a mistake: in this tank we can

see nothing but a few rock-fish darting about.' But wait a minute; Monsieur is going to throw in some heads of sardines, procured from the neighbouring *usine*, or curing-house, and then we shall see the turbot. And as the first piece of fish struck the water, the whole tank became alive; and we saw that the bottom was literally paved with huge turbot, who, lying with their dark sides undermost, would have escaped the notice of the sharpest eye, so exactly did their upper surfaces correspond in colour to the sandy bottom on which they lay. Such crowding and pushing for the food! From all parts of the tank, the great flat-fish came flapping to the feast, till the corner of the tank below us was a struggling mass of turbot. The lithe and active rock-fish darted in and out between the unwieldy turbot, and often snatched the food out of their very jaws, trusting to their speed to escape the snap of the ill-treated creatures.

The next tank contained some specimens of the huge angel-fish. These gentlemen were very sleepy in their dispositions, and refused to move even when stirred with a long pole. They spend most of their time at the bottom of the sea, rooting and burrowing in the sand, and swallowing all the fish which they dig out. After this, we were conducted into the building attached to the viviers. The room which we entered was surrounded on three sides by glass aquaria; the fourth side was devoted to a series of square glass basins, all of which communicated with one another, so that a constant stream of water could be passed through them. In some of these basins, a series of curious experiments had been carried on with turbots, soles, and other flat-fish. Each basin was lined with different-coloured sand—black, white, gray, and yellow. The flat-fish kept in these compartments were found, in course of time, to change in colour, until their upper surfaces corresponded exactly in hue and shade to the sand on which they lay. So exactly did they assimilate themselves to the various-coloured bottoms of their tanks, that it was hard to distinguish them from the sand, even in the shallow basins in which they were kept. All these fish were quite tame, and answered to the whistle of the curator, coming to the surface to feed from his hand. So eager were they to seize the food, that one of them actually struggled out of his tank in the pursuit. In one small basin there was a solitary lobster of large size, who, upon being addressed by the curator as 'Fifine,' rose to the surface, and looked out from between his formidable claws, as if expecting some food. He was presented with a piece of sardine; but this had to be put into his mouth with great caution, as the ungrateful creature snapped fiercely with his huge nippers at the friendly hand that was feeding him. In some of the tanks there were invalid lobsters, who had lost one or both of their claws. These were kept separate, for the purpose of watching the very wonderful process of reproduction; for when the lobster loses a limb, he is not a hopeless cripple to the end of his days, but in due time grows a new claw in the place of the lost one. This accounts for the number of lobsters which are brought to the market with claws of unequal size. The lobster parts with his claws with great facility, for he is a very quarrelsome fellow, and frequently loses one of these members in an encounter. Besides this, any sudden noise, such as the report of a gun, will cause the lobster to shake off his

claws. As soon as the limb is gone, he retires into private life, and in a short time a new claw buds forth from the joint, and grows rapidly. We could not discover whether the new limb ever attains the same size as the other.

In a circular stone basin in the centre of the room were kept a number of conger-eels. These creatures were supplied with several earthenware pipes, into which they crawled. These pipes were supposed to replace in some degree the crannies and holes in the rocks in which the conger-eel delights to hide himself; but as most of the eels were lying with their heads out of one end of the pipes, and their tails out of the other, the concealment was about as complete as that of the ostrich, who is said to hide his head in the sand, and fancy that, 'because he can't see the hunters, therefore the hunters can't see him.' We were told that but little is known of the habits of the conger-eel, more particularly of its manner of breeding, and that this tank was made especially with a view to observing the manners and customs of this species. One of the most curious things that we saw was the egg of the dog-fish. The dog-fish, being a kind of shark, would be a dangerous neighbour to other and less voracious fish, so a separate glass tank of considerable size was assigned to a female dog-fish and her eggs. These eggs are the same as the curious leathery pouches which are so common on the sea-shore, and are known by the name of 'devil's purses.' But the living egg with the young shark in it is a very different-looking thing to the dried horny devil's purse. In the first place, the egg is provided with a long tail-like filament at each corner; these filaments are entangled in and attached to the weeds at the bottom, and serve to keep the egg moored, and prevent it being dashed about by the waves. In the second place, the living egg, instead of being black in colour, like the empty purse, is of a brownish yellow, and semi-transparent, so that the young shark is plainly visible through the outer covering. This dog-fish appeared to be quite blind by daylight, for she took no notice of a piece of sardine that was dropped in front of her, until it was pushed under her nose, when she devoured it greedily.

In another compartment were several of the pretty little sea-horses. The curator kindly shook the weeds to which they had attached themselves by their prehensile tails, that we might have an opportunity of observing their very curious mode of progression. This fish glides through the water in the most curious attitudes, and, at a first glance, one would think without any visible exertion; but upon looking closer, the beautiful dorsal fin can be seen vibrating with tremendous rapidity, and with a curious wavy motion. The extraordinary attitudes assumed by this fish, both when at rest and in motion, together with the strong resemblance in its head to that of the quadruped from which it takes its name, gives it a most quaint and unique appearance. After shewing us these and many other curious things, the curator offered to conduct us to the laboratories, which occupy an up-stair room. We were unable, from want of time, to avail ourselves of this offer, but we were informed that they were fitted up with every convenience, and contained all the apparatus necessary for investigating the natural history and structure of the inhabitants of the sea. These laboratories are

accessible to any student of natural history. We were altogether highly delighted with our visit to the viviers.

On coming away from the viviers, we saw that the fleet of fishing-boats was returning from the capture of the sardines. After watching the first few boats pass into the harbour, we directed our steps to one of the usines, as the curing-houses are called. On arriving at the gates, we encountered a stream of boys and men carrying baskets full of sardines. These were carried into a long room, and thrown down upon heaps arranged in rows along the floor. Beside each heap was seated a girl or woman, armed with a sharp knife, whose occupation was to cut off the head of the sardine, and prepare it for the salting. The decapitation was performed by a stroke of the knife from the back of the head obliquely downwards; and in this manner the head and intestines were removed together, and the trouble of cleaning each fish separately was saved. The heads and entrails were thrown into pails, and carried away for manure, and the bodies were passed on in tubs to the salting-room. Here women were again employed arranging the sardines in layers, in large rectangular tubs, and spreading salt over each layer. The fish are allowed to remain in salt from two to three hours, and then they are taken out and arranged on wire-frames. Each frame accommodates a dozen fish, and these frames are lowered into large caldrons of boiling oil for about thirty seconds. They are then carried out, and hung upon racks in the open air, and in about two hours are ready to be packed into boxes, and soldered down for exportation. If the weather is damp or rainy, the sardines are dried before fires in an underground room. The tin boxes in which they are packed, and which are familiar to all of us, are made in the usines, and the copper labels are attached to them afterwards by the different houses who buy them from the exporters. A great number of the sardines consumed in England come from Concarneau, but, of course, our market is also supplied from other fisheries.

A SEA-SIDE SKETCH.

THE sun sinks down a round red disc;
And seen against it, tapering thin
(Believed of all the cares of risk),

The fishing-smacks come riding in.

Slow sinks the orb beyond the bay,
Or so, at least, it seems to sink—
A thirsty charger, shall I say?
Slow stooping in the sea to drink.

And beating shoreward, sea-gray gulls
Come sailing up the Sound in flocks,
Then clean their wings, and seek their holes,
Aloft amid the rifted rocks.

The soft winds play round poop and prow,
Too weak to climb the rocky cliff,
Within whose deepening shadow now
Lie bulky barge and tiny skiff.

And over all the scene anon
A denser darkness draws around;
The village lights shew one by one,
And night comes hushing every sound.